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ABSTRACT

Using the guiding question, "What is reading?," this lesson invites students to interact with a variety of different texts as they attempt to uncover the skills necessary to successfully interact with the text. Based upon the discussion that follows, students will create a living definition of reading. During three 40-minute lessons, students will: identify different characteristics of texts from basic picture books to textbooks; compile a list of processes needed to read the different types of books; and develop a living definition of reading. The instructional plan, lists of resources, student assessment/reflection activities, and a list of National Council of Teachers of English/International Reading Association (NCTE/IRA) Standards addressed in the lesson are included. A reading survey is attached. (PM)

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Developing a Living Definition of Reading in the Elementary Classroom

Author

Amy Mozombite
Largo, Florida

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Grade Band

3-5

Estimated Lesson Time

Three 40 minute sessions

Overview

Students will investigate the reading process and end up with a working definition of reading using different types of books. Each student brainstorms what it means to be a successful reader. Based upon shared findings and discussions, students will create a living definition of reading. This definition can be posted and revised as more is learned about reading during the year.

From Theory to Practice

Routman, Regie. 2000. *Conversations: Strategies for Teaching, Learning, and Evaluating*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Routman states, "Strategies are the thinking, problem-solving mental processes that the learner deliberately initiates, incorporates, and applies to construct meaning...When teaching for strategies, we build on the child's existing foundation of what he knows and show how him how to connect that knowledge to new situations." (130)

Reader's Handbook: A Student's Guide for Reading and Learning. 2002. Wilmington, Great Source.

This is a book dedicated to teaching students how to read different types of literature including textbooks, nonfiction (essay, biography, autobiography, newspaper and magazine articles, speeches), fiction (short story and novel), poetry, drama, Web sites, and graphs. This handbook suggests that reading is a tool, a skill, and an ability (24) and that the reading process is like a "road map leading you through different kinds of reading, making sure you don't get lost"(37).

Atwell, Nancie. 1998. *In the Middle*. Portsmith, Boynton/Cook.

Atwell discusses the importance of reading in the classroom. This book is a wealth of information on reading. Specific to this lesson, there is a list of genres (266) and reading strategies (267). The Reading survey that Atwell suggests is found in the Appendix. (495)

McClure, Amy and Janice Kristo, Eds. 2002. *Adventuring with Books: A Booklist for Pre-K-Grade 6*. 13th Ed. Urbana, National Council of Teachers of English.

This booklist will be helpful in aiding the teacher in the choosing of books for the activities above.

Student Objectives

Students will

- Identify different characteristics of texts from basic picture books to textbooks.

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- Compile a list of processes needed to read the different types of books.
- Develop a living definition of reading.

Resources

- Reading Survey Handout
- Interactive Reading Tips Web Site
- How to Study Web Site
- Stages of Reading Literature as Aesthetic Experiencing Web Site
- Teaching Reading Process Strategies Web Site
- Young Adult Book Web Sites
- Notecards
- Paper
- Selected Books

Instructional Plan

Preparation

1. Rewriting/typing each student's definition of reading for distribution.
2. Compiling a large variety of books (see "From Theory to Practice" above for suggestions).

Instruction and Activities

Session One

Teachers will hand out one note card to each student in the class. Each student will answer the question "What is Reading?" on the note card. After class, the teacher will compile the list of definitions on a handout keeping each student's work anonymous! This will be used for the next lesson.

Session Two

The teacher will present the class with the list of definitions composed by the students. In groups of four, the students will read through the list, discussing which elements they feel are most needed in a concise definition of reading. Students will need to make notes on their papers as they discuss, because they will then rewrite a definition of reading that they all agree upon. Teachers of third graders may need to make modifications based on the maturity of the students. For example, you might want to do full class discussions instead of small group work.

Session Three

The teacher will hand out copies of many different types of books which may include the following: picture books, beginning readers, elementary books on different reading levels, textbooks from different grades and subjects-elementary through college level, adult fiction and non-fiction, reference books, dictionaries, poetry anthologies, plays, diaries, professional books and perhaps different web sites depending on the level of the students. Each student will have one book from which to work.

The teacher will discuss how important it is to know how to read different types of literature noting the variety of books that the students now have in their hands. Point out that the students should identify at what age their book might be read (audience) and in what context it would be found. At this point, It would be helpful for the teacher to model what is expected of each student. Taking a picture book or book of choice, show students how one comes about deciding the intended audience and what skills are needed to read a specific text. This can be done by showing them the cover and several pages in the book while asking students questions or by "thinking" aloud so that students can see how they can create a list of strategies! With this information, students will brainstorm and list as many strategies as possible that will be needed to successfully read and

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understand the book given to them. The teacher may find it helpful to hand out a list of strategies for the students to pull from or brainstorm that list on the board.

The students can then share their list with a partner and help each other come up with other strategies that might have been missed. At this point, the class will come together and brainstorm on the board a large list of strategies from all the different types of books. Watch for teachable moments on topics like the following:

- Length does not mean the book is better nor more difficult
- What to do before reading, during reading, and after reading
- The importance of being an active reader

From the generated list, help students compare, evaluate and summarize the most important aspects and write a class-generated definition of reading.

Extensions

- The surveys done in the Student Assessment/Reflections part of the lesson can be kept by the teacher and redone at the end of the year. Students can then compare how they have grown and changed in their thoughts on reading over the course of the school year!

- Discuss with your class why people read. Use the books that were handed out and brainstorm why people might read the different texts. This activity would lend itself easily to discussing the importance of reading in lifelong learning. The final definition of reading should be posted in a prominent place in the classroom and referred back to throughout the year. As new insights emerge the definition can be revised. Students can group the books used in class and discuss the different groups that are identified. These groups might include the following distinctions: non-fiction and fiction, by reading levels, pictures and no pictures. This can allow for extended talk on the variety of forms that literature within a certain genre can take.

- The teacher can do a lesson only using Internet based literature. How to read and understand different web sites and the importance of technology in our lives. Assign the students a certain reading strategy such as highlighting key words and sentences and have them practice on an assigned text after modeling the behavior desired for the class. Study skills can be incorporated as you extend the lesson by inviting students to choose which strategies would work best during specific activities such as test taking.

Web Resources

How to Study Web Site
http://www.how-to-study.com/read.htm
A Web site that is dedicated to helping students become better readers and improve thier reading skills.

Interactive Reading Tips Web Site
http://helponenglish.homestead.com/read.html
This site provides interactive reading tips for students.

Young Adult Book Web Sites
http://www.wested.org/stratlit/research/booklinks.shtml
A list of Young Adult book Web sites. One can find a large variety of booklists.

Stages of Reading Literature as Aesthetic Experiencing Web Site
http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/eng391/reading_process.htm

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Stages of Reading Literature as Aesthetic Experiencing provides a deeper analysis of reading including first readings, re-reading, and Critical/Analytic Reading. A great site for further professional development.

Student Assessment/Reflections

- Students will be asked to look at their definition again in their group of four and compare it with the final class generated definition.
- Each student will be given a Reading Survey Handout to fill out.
- Ask students to write three goals for themselves, as readers based on the processes they feel need the most work and/or will be the most beneficial to them.

NCTE/IRA Standards

1 - Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

2 - Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.

3 - Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

6 - Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.

7 - Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

8 - Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

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Reading Survey

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. If you had to guess...

How many books would you say you own? ___
How many books would you say are in your house? ___
How many books would you say you have read in the last twelve months? ___

2. How did you learn to read?

3. Why do people read? List as many reasons as you can think of.

4. What does someone have to do in order to be a good reader?

5. What kind of books do you like to read?

6. How do you decide which books you will read?

7. Who are your favorite authors?

8. Have you ever reread a book? ___
If so, can you list the titles?

9. How often do you read at home?

10. In general, how do you feel about reading?

(Taken and adapted slightly from Nancie Atwell's book *In The Middle*, 2d ed. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc, 1998.)

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